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Answers Beg More Questions

BY TED LEWIS

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WASHINGTON — Ev-

erytime anybody who knows anything about the Cuba problem says something about it, the more it becomes apparent that only a congressional investigation can bring out the facts.

Last week both former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and President Kennedy had something to say about the controversial subject, and, as usual, what was said raised more questions than provided answers.

Mr. Kennedy, for example, knocked down the report that a big new Soviet weapons buildup is under way in Cuba. This report came from Sen. Kenneth B. Keating (R-N.Y.), who told the Senate his information had been checked by high level intelligence officials.

What Keating said tied in with Pentagon reports that nine or 10 Soviet cargo ships were reaching Havana weekly and that some, at least, carried military material.

Depled by Kennedy

Not so, Mr. Kennedy told his Thursday press conference. He said the best information he has is that only one Soviet ship "possibly" carrying arms has arrived in Cuba since the October missile crisis and there is no evidence that this ship delivered offensive weapons.

The President, of course, should know far more about what is going on than Sen. Keating. But it must be admitted that Keating had information about the big Soviet missiles last fall weeks before the administration even acknowledged this threat.

While the Senate Latin American Affairs subcommittee and Preparedness subcommittee are planning probes on the Soviet buildup in Cuba, only a full-dress, non-partisan congressional investigation can clear up the whole matter. It would also, if properly run, determine once and for all whether the Eisenhower administration did or did not contemplate use of American planes as "air cover" in an invasion by anti-Castro exiles.

Eisenhower Interviewed

Gen. Eisenhower, in a television interview last week, said there was no plan when he was in the White House for supplying such air cover.

Gen. Eisenhower's assertion agreed with what Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy said earlier last week that such air protection was neither planned nor promised for the Bay of Pigs invasion force — either by this administration or the Eisenhower administration.

But in May, 1961, after the invasion fiasco, Gen. Eisenhower told a group of old associates that the plan contemplated by him and his advisers in 1960, and which would have gone into effect had Richard M. Nixon been elected President, "guaranteed" the success of any invasion by the exiles.

Additional Support

If necessary there would be massive air and naval support, even use of Marine and paratroop contingents to assure success of the invasion.

A congressional investigation should try to straighten out this matter, now that Gen. Eisenhower appears to have second thoughts about what was happening in the early stages of the secret invasion operation.

The "air cover" controversy has become even more confused by what various ransomed Bay of Pigs prisoners have been saying since they were released. One, Manuel Penabaz, called a press conference last Thursday to accent his previously-published charges that U.S. support for the invasion had been promised. He said that all members of his

brigade, while in training in Guatemala, had been told early in January, 1961, before Mr. Kennedy took office, that the invasion would not be allowed to fail.

He named Frank Bender, described as a top level Central Intelligence Agency agent, as promising in a speech to the entire brigade, all-out U.S. military aid if necessary during the landing.

When Penabaz said fibes almost exactly with what Gen. Eisenhower said in the aftermath days of the fiasco in discussing what invasion support plans were in the works.

If it had not been for such pledges, there is no doubt that the 1,500-man Cuban invasion force would never have been kept intact. As Penabaz explained: "None of us wanted to commit suicide. I know that all our brigade leaders and fighters believed that air cover would be furnished us."

"Do you think," he asked,

that any U.S. military man would be foolish enough to believe that our little band of 1,500 men could win against Castro's 800,000 militia without air support?"

This is almost exactly what Maj. Gen. William B. Persons, Gen. Eisenhower's White House chief of staff, said in May, 1961. No general, Persons argued, would have approved an invasion such as was launched, unless U.S. "air cover" and other assistance was handy. "Even a buck private would have known better than that," Persons said.

Well, so far as the record now available is concerned, presumably Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer and the rest of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did just what Persons said not even a buck private would do.

But even this "official version" of how the joint chiefs approved the go-it-alone plan is subject to considerable doubt with a congressional inquiry on-
tains full disclosures.

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